

# **East Jemez Resources Council Meeting**

*Meeting Minutes – May 2, 2002*

## **Welcome and Introductions – Neil Weber and Myron Gonzales (San Ildefonso Pueblo)**

Neil Weber opened the East Jemez Resources Council (Council) meeting by welcoming new attendees, facilitating introductions, and briefly reviewing the meeting agenda. Santa Clara Pueblo offered a welcomed invocation in recognition of the 2-year anniversary of the Cerro Grande Fire. The Council meeting agenda and attendance list is attached to the mailed copy of these minutes.

## **EJRC Charter and discussion – All**

Neil Weber led a general discussion regarding the current and future purpose of the Council. The Council discussed the EJRC Charter and identified some necessary updates and corrections that will be addressed. The questions of whether-or-not the Council should be a “decision-making” – as apposed to primarily an information sharing – organization, was discussed. Diana Webb (LANL) commented that the original driver behind the Council was to respond to a need to provide a non-political venue for regional land managers to discuss resources management issues. Leonard Atencio (USFS – Santa Fe National Forest) cited item eight of the EJRC Charter, which specifically states that the Council is not a decision-making body. Carey Bare (LANL) noted that many of the current entities that participate on the Council have not yet signed the charter. Neil Weber suggested that making the Council a decision-making body would create a political climate that could discourage entities from signing the charter. At the end of the discussion, there was general consensus that the Council best serves its members and participants as an information-sharing organization. A review and revision of the charter will be pursued in the next several months.

## **Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership (PPWP) Working Group Update**

### **Ralph Ford-Schmid (New Mexico Environment Dept.) and Ken Mullen (LANL)**

The PPWP Working Group update was a two-part presentation including an overview of a cooperative PCB study being led by Ralph Ford-Schmid, and an update on the effort to apply for additional 319 grant funding by Ken Mullen.

Ralph provided an overview of a PCB sampling study that focuses on bed load and suspended sediments in Sandia and Pueblo Canyons. Analytical results using new EPA methods have indicated that some standards are exceeded, and the study is designed to differentiate between contamination associated bed load versus suspended sediments. Ralph closed with a proposal to pursue a larger cooperative PCB sampling study in the upper Rio Grande watershed to determine what the regional background for PCB contamination, and discriminate between sources from direct industrial releases versus sources from atmospheric redistribution.

On behalf of LANL, Ken Mullen distributed copies of LANL’s Official News Release Statement in response to the May 1, 2002 NMED Draft Order for LANL Corrective Action. An electronic version of the LANL News Release Statement was also distributed electronically to the EJRC prior to this Council meeting. Ken also provided an update on the activities associated with administering and managing the Clean Water Act Section 319 funding that was received by the PPWP last year. The grant is being used primarily for administration and burn area rehabilitation activities such as re-seeding and planting trees. The Volunteer Task Force is providing matching

funds-in-kind through volunteer efforts. The PPWP anticipates applying for 319 funds in the next grant cycle. The focus of this next application will be on regional erosion control measures. Ken solicited input and recommendations from the Council regarding the scope and activities associated with the next PPWP 319 grant proposal.

### **Seeking Common Ground Update**

#### **John Peterson (Santa Fe National Forest – Jemez District)**

John provided a brief background on the origin, original intent, and direction of Seeking Common Ground. Seeking Common Ground is a four-year-old multi-entity organization that focuses on environmental and social issues associated with elk management throughout the region. One of the primary agendas of the organization has been to identify and build a consensus for solutions to depredation associated with elk. An objective is to develop a depredation menu that includes a number of different solutions that can be applied to a variety of different elk depredation problems. The menu is being developed with direct input from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, the US Forest Service, regional Pueblos, and numerous private land owners. The menu is anticipated to be available next fall.

### **The Nature Conservancy and Cooperative Agreements**

#### **Patrick McCarthy (The Nature Conservancy)**

Patrick McCarthy, the Director of Stewardship for The New Mexico Nature Conservancy, provided an overview of a Fire Learning Network (FLN) initiative that has selected the Jemez Mountains as one of five national focal sites. The FLN is a two-year multi-agency initiative led by the Nature Conservancy and designed to restore selected fire adapted ecosystems. The goal of the initiative is to establish a scientific foundation for landscape scale fire management that integrates fuels reduction with fire regime restoration through effective government, public and private partnerships. The project in the Jemez Mountains is intended to establish a foundation for collaborative management to make communities at risk safer and restoring fire as a natural process in maintaining ecosystem health. For more information on the Nature Conservancy's FLN, please contact Patrick McCarthy at (505) 988-3867.

### **Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP) Update**

#### **Leonard Atencio, Forest Supervisor (Santa Fe National Forest)**

Leonard Atencio gave a status on the Valles Caldera National Preserve (VCNP). The transition from interim management status to full management by the VCNP Board is anticipated to be complete in June. Leonard reported on some of the management initiatives that are underway including infrastructure improvement projects (road surfacing and potable water supply systems), and an auction that will be held to win elk management hunt permits. Anticipated near-term uses of the Preserve include limited cattle grazing and public access via 2-6 mile tour-guided hikes. There was a brief discussion regarding concerns about the possible construction of a geothermal power plant, and the scale of cattle grazing that may occur on the VCNP. Leonard commented that although the VCNP is required to generate income, the power plant is just a proposal at this point and cattle grazing is anticipated to involve many less head of cattle than what was allowed on the Baca Land Grant. Leonard reported that there will be additional tours of the Preserve from June through October, and the request for proposal for permanent tour guides was going to be released soon.

## **Transferring Federal Lands with Cultural Resources: DOE/NNSA Land Conveyance and Transfer Project**

**John Isaacson (LANL)**

John Isaacson presented an overview of a cultural resources management strategy that is being used by DOE/NNSA and LANL to maintain compliance with the several federal cultural resources regulations while implementing the DOE Conveyance and Transfer project. In 1997, the US Congress passed a Public Law to implement a project to transfer 10 tracts of LANL land from DOE ownership to a combination of Los Alamos County (LAC) and San Ildefonso Pueblo ownership. The transfer project is designed to encourage LAC self-sufficiency and return ancestral lands to San Ildefonso. Some of the ten tracts include numerous cultural resources sites that, once transferred to LAC, will no longer receive federal protection. Under cultural resources regulations governing federal lands, transferring cultural resources to non-federal entities is considered an undertaking with adverse affects. As a result, the sites have to be mitigated (excavated) or protected under preservation easement before the tracts can be transferred. The strategy used for the transfer project a process documented with a Memorandum of Agreement between DOE/NNSA and the regulators that facilitates a combination of cultural resources preservation (via preservation easements) where appropriate, and mitigation (via excavation). The easements are held and managed by a third-party non-profit organization – the Taos Land Trust. John commented that the lessons learned from developing the strategy is that 1) the consultation process provided under law works and should be used, and 2) the process of establishing and implementing these kinds of strategies takes a considerable amount of time and should be initiated early. For additional information, please contact John Isaacson at (505) 667-2276.

## **Roundtable Discussion – All**

### **US Forest Service, Santa Fe National Forest**

John Peterson reported on the serious drought conditions affecting the Jemez District. He noted that there is very low grass production in livestock grazing areas and that many of the recreational areas are at risk from the threat of wildfire. John noted that the USFS opened many campgrounds early in anticipation that public access to the forest service lands would probably have to be closed beginning late May or early June. Leonard Atencio recommended individuals visit the forests as soon as possible before access is closed due to the drought and the extreme threat of wildfire.

### **Los Alamos National Laboratory**

On behalf of the PPWP, Ken Mullen asked the Council to consider and provide recommendations that could be submitted in the next 319 grant proposal. Carey Bare reported that LANL is very busy implementing site-wide forest thinning and that the drought and associated wildfire risk was directly affecting outdoor activities. Carey said a site for the air curtain burner has been selected, but the burner is not being used at this time. He also reported that LANL was conducting fish sampling along the Rio Grande using a new electro-shock system. The sampling is being conducted in association with the Cerro Grande fire and the intent is to monitor for both chemicals and any physical anomalies. Carey closed with a brief overview of a LANL re-organizations which has established a new Risk Reduction and

Environmental Stewardship Division which, in part, consolidates the environmental protection and stewardship functions of LANL under one organization.

*New Mexico State Forestry Department*

Nancy Neskauskas briefly reported on the on-going NM State Forestry Department initiative to work to reduce the risk of wildfire in 20 separate wildland/forest interface communities. She announced a Fire Wise Panel meeting scheduled for May 10 – 11. The panel anticipates using the Hyde Park Community as a pilot.

*Santa Clara Pueblo*

Mike Chavarria reported that Santa Clara Pueblo was continuing to implement Cerro Grande fire thinning projects including thinning within the Pueblo's bosque areas. Santa Clara Pueblo is also pursuing an elk and deer collaring project near the VCNP.

*Bandelier National Monument (BNM)*

John Mack reported that the funding for preparing the environmental assessment for improving the main road into BNM was delayed until next fiscal year. John also reported that BNM was working with DOE/NNSA and LANL to implement forest-thinning activities on the BNM side of State Highway 4. He noted that Rory Gauthier was leading a project at the park to perform archaeological surveys in the un-surveyed areas of the backcountry. John proposed to report the results of the survey at the next Council meeting on August 1, 2002.

*San Ildefonso Pueblo*

Timothy Martinez, Lieutenant Governor of San Ildefonso Pueblo, commented that he felt the EJRC was a good example of a team doing an excellent job promoting regional communication. He said the Council was a good example of an important partnership for consulting and providing input on taking care of natural resources, and he wants to see the effort continue.

*Jemez Pueblo*

Tom Lucero of Jemez Pueblo briefly commented that under the current drought conditions water was becoming a problem at the Pueblo.

**Future Agenda Items and Closing – All**

The following topics were proposed as agenda items for the August 1, 2002, EJRC meeting:

- Revisions to the EJRC Charter
- Working Group Updates

Suggestions for additional agenda items will be solicited prior to the August meeting.